

This board meeting was conducted virtually, via Zoom, on the evening of Tuesday, January 13, 2026. President Keith Schmidt was presiding. We had our other three officers: Vice President Ward Wells, Secretary Tom Marcussen and Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek. We had all four of our active Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Neal Wegner, and Mike Yuhas. There is one vacancy on the board. We also had member Brian Hechel. All eight of the active officers and directors were present (see above). We therefore had a quorum (which is six or more). Keith Schmidt called the meeting to order, as recording began, at 6:36 pm. That was the first agenda item.

The second agenda item was review and approval of the minutes from the previous in-person board meeting held on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at the Pizza Ranch in Sussex. Secretary Tom Marcussen (who was excused from that meeting) had distributed copies of those draft minutes (from an August 20 e-mail) to all officers and directors on Monday, January 5, with a note that the April 22 date shown was incorrect. No one offered any corrections other than the date. Mike Yuhas moved that those minutes be approved, with the corrected date. Ward Wells offered a second. The motion passed by a unanimous (voice and show-of-hands) vote.

The third agenda item was the Treasurer's report from Tara Grudzielanek:

- We do not yet have a year-end statement from our Heartland Mutual Fund. Our September 30 statement (the latest available) showed a balance of \$125,012.95.
- Our year-end Landmark Credit Union statement showed balances of:
 - \$7947.02 in checking.
 - \$4171.78 in savings.
 - \$13,752.78 in 18-month CD that will mature on May 16, 2026.
- She will be meeting with Heartland on Wednesday, February 4, to change the names and contact information on our account.

There were no questions on the Treasurer's report. Keith Schmidt accepted the report as presented.

The fourth agenda item was the Membership Report from Membership Committee Chair Mike Yuhas. We have 94 active paid-up members, through the end of 2026, as of today. One more came in today's mail, and was not processed in yet. That will make it 95. There were 47 non-renewals from 2025. Mike said that two of those had said they planned to renew. Secretary Tom Marcussen said he and his wife Karen Challis were in the same situation. That makes four more on the way. Late renewals are still trickling in. Mike had sent individual e-mail reminders to the non-renewals. There were no questions on the membership report. Keith Schmidt accepted it as presented.

The fifth agenda item was the Grant Committee report from Chair Mike Yuhas. He has had some preliminary organizational conversations with the other member Jim Sponholz. No formal business has been conducted yet.

The sixth agenda item was Old Business. No one was aware of any.

Agenda Items seven through thirteen all fall under New Business. They are separated for clarity.

The seventh agenda item was the annual election, at the upcoming annual business meeting on Friday, February 6, 2026. Every officer and director position is up for election. All of the incumbent officers and

directors (listed in the first paragraph above) are running for re-election. Brian Hechel is volunteering to run for the now-vacant director position. We will propose the above slate. Every legal member (paid-up national and chapter membership is required) is eligible to run for any position. Other nominations will be accepted at any time up to the annual business meeting, or from the floor at that meeting.

There was a discussion, from the published agenda, on changing to two-year terms, with alternating offices up for election in alternating years. More continuity is desirable, especially for the offices of President and Treasurer, which have steep learning curves and formal transition procedures. A number of different options were suggested and considered. There was a semi-consensus (no formal vote) in favor of two-year terms for officers, and one-year terms for directors / board members. Any change to our current one-year terms for all is likely to require an amendment to the Chapter by-laws. Keith will review the requirements for that with Dave Nelson, who supervised the last revision. They will try to put a proposal together for the annual business meeting. It might require more time to implement, and not take effect in time for the 2026 election. All of the four current officers (listed in the first paragraph above) indicated that they would be willing to serve for the two years of 2026 and 2027.

The upstairs Friendship Lounge was pretty tight / compact for the 19 who showed up in person for the January 2 meeting. The annual business meeting will probably have to be held in the larger basement meeting room. We will have the option of waiting to see how the weather is and how many show up in person before we decide.

The eighth agenda item was Keith Schmidt's wrap-up report on our 75th anniversary year in 2025. We held a number of special events. The main ones were the Christopher Transportation Museum on Saturday, June 7; Wisconsin Chapter Day at East Troy on Saturday, July 19; Soo Line #1003 trip on Saturday, August 23; and the 75th anniversary banquet on Saturday, October 4. Some of these were expensive. Keith will send out a heads-up to the membership, warning them to expect a large amount of expenses in the annual Treasurer's report for 2025. That is a one-year thing. We will not be spending that much money every year going forward.

The ninth agenda item was an update to our plan to establish a one-year "Grant CD," using our \$8244.02 bequest from the estate of the late Robert Simonis of Stevens Point. We may set aside / add additional money from other Chapter funds to establish a larger balance. The interest / proceeds will fund annual grants to advance our Chapter's historic preservation goals. No action had been taken yet.

The tenth agenda item was to move the April meeting, which would normally be scheduled for Friday, April 3 (Good Friday—the church site will not be available) to April 10. All that requires is a phone call to the church, and a notice in *Sparks & Cinders*. Keith Schmidt agreed to handle those.

The eleventh agenda item was the 2026 Annual Chapter Banquet. We are considering moving back to May, and from a dinner to a luncheon. Our October 4, 2025, banquet would have had only 35 local attendees, if we had not had the remote attendees from the National Fall Conference. A luncheon could be offered at a lower cost, and remove the disincentive of night driving. The sky stays light much later in May than in October. There was no objection to having the 2025 and 2026 banquets only seven months apart. The long cold winter provides plenty of psychological separation. Doing a luncheon would remove most of the competition with weddings that has plagued us in May, and is spreading to October (and all other safe-weather months?). The luncheon would be offered on a Saturday (or a Sunday?), so that those members and guests who are still working full time would be able to attend.

We are going to try to return to the Polish Center of Wisconsin in Franklin. The large room that we had on October 4, 2025, is already booked up for all Saturday evening dates in October 2026. They have a smaller room that would be about the right size for 35-40 attendees. Its availability is unknown. Tara and Dan Grudzielanek will check what our options are. We will conduct a non-binding preference survey at the February 6 annual business meeting. There will be two questions—May vs. October, and afternoon luncheon vs. evening dinner.

The twelfth agenda item was any ideas for the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, which is coming up later in July (and all year) 2026. There are well-founded rumors that Union Pacific Big Boy 4-8-8-4 #4014 will be touring more of the United States, including the eastern parts. Whether or not it will be in Wisconsin is a big unknown. Absent any such rare opportunities, the consensus was in favor of something less expensive and less formal, like a picnic or an East Troy trip, or possibly a combination of those two (or other) ideas.

The thirteenth agenda item was a possible outing / trip to the Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) (former Rock Island) steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois, just east of Rock Island in the Quad Cities area. We were planning to do that as a part of our 75th anniversary year in 2025. It did not happen, partly because we did not work out a date that was acceptable to all parties. That shop is only open on working days, which are weekdays. A number of members were not available then. There was a suggestion to piggy-back our trip onto a weekend public open house so that it could take place on a weekend. We would lose the option of exclusive access to the shop, but gain enough attendees to make the economics of the charter bus work out.

The fourteenth agenda item was “anything else for the good of the chapter. A number of issues were discussed:

We are looking for more presentations for upcoming meetings in 2026. Keith Schmidt will present aerial / drone views of railroads and support facilities on February 6. This will be a shortened presentation because of the annual business meeting. We currently have nothing scheduled beyond that.

Keith asked Director Ralph McClure to provide a short biography / introduction (similar to those from the other officers and directors). Those for the rest of us were published in the February 2024 issue of Sparks & Cinders. A copy was e-mailed to all of us—for re-checking—on Sunday, January 11. Ralph was not a director candidate then. All bios will be published again in the February 2026 issue of Sparks & Cinders.

Mike Yuhas is going to be updating the board meeting minutes on our Chapter web site. Secretary Tom Marcussen will be sending him copies of the latest / approved minutes to be used for that purpose. Mike will also be working on getting recordings of some of our more recent presentations on to our web site.

We will have a display table at the Mad City Train Show in Madison, Wisconsin, on the weekend of February 21-22. We are looking for volunteers to staff it. Interested members should contact Ward Wells at wwardw@hotmail.com.

We may have another upcoming opportunity to meet the public at the annual train show at the Mitchell Park Domes. The 2026 show starts in about two weeks around the end of January. They will be offering a “layout room” where model railroaders can bring in and set up portable layouts. Plain tables might be

available, for us to bring in and show what we have to offer. We are probably too late to get in on this, and to get volunteers and materials together, for 2026. We will try for 2027 if there is interest.

There was no further business to discuss. Keith Schmidt said that he would entertain a motion to adjourn. That was the fifteenth and final agenda item. Ward Wells offered a motion to adjourn. Ralph McClure seconded it. There was no discussion or opposition. All were in favor. Keith Schmidt declared the board meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm. Recording stopped at 7:34 pm. Some off-the-record social time followed. The Zoom meeting room closed about 7:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Thomas W. Marcussen
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary